

Businesses form pro-infrastructure coalition

By Adam Snider

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Featuring Kathryn A. Wolfe and Kevin Robillard

EXCLUSIVE — The advocacy problem: House Transportation Chairman Bill Shuster, as many in the transportation community have mused to MT in recent years, thinks that traditional transportation interests — think road-builders, civil engineers and asphalt companies — shouldn't lead the fight for a new transportation bill. The concern amongst advocates is that the public and lawmakers will think they're simply asking for a check that will help line their own pockets. Instead, they say, the rallying cries need to come from the businesses that live and die by the national transportation network.

The solution: With the Highway Trust Fund set to run dry as early as July, it looks like Shuster will get his wish. Kathryn has the scoop on the Alliance for American Competitiveness that's launching today: "The AAC will be composed initially of UPS, Honeywell, Dow Chemical, BNSF and Caterpillar — five major corporations whose collective fingers probably reach into every lawmaker's state or district, and whose success depends at least in part on a functioning supply chain. Together the companies employ close to half a million people, the group says. It plans to deploy an economic argument: According to the group, every dollar spent on infrastructure investment over a two-year period generates \$1.92 in economic output. Over the course of two decades, the group argues, that dollar will amount to \$3.21 in output. ... Matt Rose, BNSF's executive chairman, called the U.S. supply chain a 'weapon of mass competitiveness in the global marketplace, which advantages not just U.S. companies' but helps American workers in an increasingly global economy.'" Kathryn has more for Pros:

HAPPENING TODAY — Golden State showdown: A California Assembly panel holds a hearing on a bill to block the CHSRA from spending any more federal money until it secures the state match that's been tied up by legal disputes over a \$10 billion bond approved in 2008. On Capitol Hill, Rep. Jeff Denham has a similar bill to halt the project. The Fresno Bee has more:

Ruberio: Florida Sen. Marco Rubio will be at Uber's headquarters in D.C. this afternoon for an "American innovation" event. Uber East Coast General Manager Rachel Holt will participate in the discussion and Rubio will also get a tour.

Traffic for driverless cars: The RAND Corporation holds a Hill briefing today on a new report on the major benefits but big obstacles to self-driving cars. RAND senior behavioral scientist James Anderson will speak in the Gold Room.

MONDAY MADNESS. Thanks for reading POLITICO's Morning Transportation, your daily tipsheet on trains, planes, automobiles and ports, where on this day in 1883, phone service opened between Chicago and New York City. Please be in touch:

“I was dreaming I was turning from a busy street into a parking lot...”

MALAYSIA SEARCH CONTINUES: There are more reports of debris off Australia's western coast (BBC), but until the plane is definitely found, the search (and speculation) continues...

From the Sunday shows: Rep. Adam Schiff: “I would expect the Congress to have hearings with the NTSB, with the FAA, to find out what is the state of the technology, how quickly they're moving to satellite transmissions, how cost effectively can we deal with this problem with finding the black boxes, extending battery life, or making them deployable.” House T&I member Patrick Meehan said the incident raises the possibility of global aviation standards. “The first thing is to start looking at global standards,” he said. “What we're doing here in the United States isn't necessarily followed around the world.” POLITICO:

ALPA urges pilots not to speculate: The internet is rife with theories from pilots with decades of experience, ranging from plausible to outright extraordinary. Many of them have been on CNN or quoted in newspaper or internet stories. But ALPA is trying to get its pilots to stop speculating about what happened. A newsletter sent to the union's nearly 50,000 members last week told them to “please refrain from commenting and instead direct all queries to the ALPA Communications Department” if contacted by news media. “It is important to remember that making assumptions that are not corroborated by evidence only fuels rampant speculation over this very tragic situation,” the group wrote.

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DOT IG LOOKING AT NHTSA'S RESPONSE TO GM ISSUES: That sure is a lot of abbreviations, but it boils down to Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx asking the official DOT watchdog to look into how NHTSA handled reports of ignition problems in some GM vehicles that led to the recall of 1.3 million U.S. vehicles. In a memo to DOT Inspector General Calvin Scovel, Foxx said an investigation “will ensure that DOT and NHTSA have a full understanding of the facts regarding the GM recall and can take corrective actions to enhance NHTSA's safety function to the extent necessary and appropriate.” Full memo:

Sued: A GM investor has sued the company for its “illegal and immoral” delay in disclosing the problem. Bloomberg:

NUMBERS NEVER LIE, IN TWO PARTS: Two key transportation groups are insisting their numbers are right. APTA is hitting back at criticisms of its recent report showing transit ridership at a 57-year high, and ARTBA wants to remind reporters that Americans really are driving more.

#1 — Driving still on the rise: ARTBA blasted out a “memo to reporters” on Friday with a pretty scathing title: “Perception is Not Reality: The Truth about U.S. Automobile Travel.” ARTBA chief economist Bill Buechner cited FHWA figures showing small VMT increases in the past two years to warn reporters against writing generally that Americans are driving less.

“The reported VMT decline between 2007 and 2011 has been seized by those whose aim is to push for federal policy that prioritizes non-automobile forms of transportation,” he writes to close the two-page memo. “The more accurate conclusion, however, is that U.S. VMT has essentially plateaued over the last 10 years, and modest growth is likely in the future. As such, the data supports continued federal policy that attempts to address both the nation’s highway and public transportation needs.”

#2 — NYC not the only transit growth, APTA says: The transit group pushed back against criticism from the Cato Institute's Randal O'Toole, who said that ridership actually dropped if you exclude the Big Apple. Darnell Grisby, APTA’s director of policy development and research, on the group’s blog: “The growth in public transportation has occurred across regions and city types. . . . Due to the combined shocks of economic dislocation and generational change, long lasting mobility shifts are likely.”

EAA AND FAA COME TOGETHER: Just one letter apart in the aviation acronym world, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Experimental Aircraft Association have agreed to a nine-year deal for air traffic control services at the annual AirVenture event in Oshkosh, Wis. Citing tight budgets amid sequestration, the FAA refused to pay for controllers for last year’s event, which drew the ire of — and an appeal from — the EAA. Under the new deal, the FAA pays for controllers and other staffers and EAA pays for their travel, lodging and other costs. The EAA can opt out if it finds a better option. T&I member and Wisconsin Rep. Tom Petri said in a statement that “I continue to question the FAA’s authority to charge EAA for the costs of AirVenture and other air shows or special events, but I’m glad this moves things forward for the time being as we look for a more permanent resolution.” The Fond du Lac Reporter has more:

THE AUTOBAHN (SPEED READ)

— Three major shipping companies win U.S. approval for alliance that could account for 40 percent of container cargo between Asia and Europe. Wall Street Journal:

— New York’s Citibike is in big financial trouble and NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio says the city can’t help out. CBS New York:

— The Texas DOT is poised to work with law enforcement to ticket and impound vehicles from those with lots of unpaid tolls. TxDOT:

— Teri Bristol will become the new COO for the FAA’s Air Traffic Organization, according to an internal email obtained by Kathryn:

— And the Association of Global Automakers taps John Bozzella as its new president and CEO. Detroit News:

— With two months to go, there are only a quarter of the 40,000 medical examiners FMCSA set for a new registry. Land Line:

— President Barack Obama signed Rep. Shuster’s heating energy bill that suspended some truck driver limits amid a crisis.

THE COUNTDOWN: MAP-21 expires and DOT funding runs out in 191 days. FAA policy is up in 556 days. The mid-term elections are in 225 days and the 2016 presidential election is in 960 days. MLB’s Opening Day is in seven days.

CABOOSE — Caught biking: Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx once proudly displayed a picture of himself biking to a crowd at a conference. But Sen. Chuck Schumer isn’t quite so open about it, and caused a little ruckus when he didn’t want to be seen biking on the sidewalk. Gothamist has the story and video:

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